



The State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner

March 25, 2008

The Honorable Iris Estabrook, Chairman
N.H. State Senate
Education Committee
State House, Room 103
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: HB 1171, an act establishing a commission to study air quality issues in public school buildings

Dear Chairman Estabrook and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on behalf of the Department of Environmental Services (DES) in support of HB 1171, which seeks to establish a commission to study air quality issues in public school buildings. DES understands that good air quality is crucial for maintaining optimum learning conditions in our schools; and we work diligently through our Environmental Health Program to assist school districts in helping them improve and maintain healthy indoor environments.

In New Hampshire, over 200,000 students and 20,000 teachers and staff (1 out of 5 residents) spend most of their day in school. In fact, more people spend more time in schools than any other type of building except the home. In addition, occupant density in schools is higher than any other type of building (including prisons and workplaces), increasing the likelihood of problems related to disease transmission, indoor air quality, ventilation, and building maintenance. While most school administrators are quite aware of these problems, they are often not adequately addressed due to issues including limited resources, competing priorities, and lack of applicable policies and standards that address indoor environmental conditions. Yet research and experience show that healthy indoor environments can not only have a significant positive impact on children's health and learning ability, but can also save time and money by minimizing energy use, maintenance costs, crisis intervention, and absenteeism.

DES views the Commission that will be formed by enactment of HB 1171 as an opportunity to develop a statewide plan to promote and encourage cost-effective, common-sense measures to assure that all children in New Hampshire have a healthy and productive environment in which to learn and excel; and we fully support enactment of this legislation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer our support for HB 1171. Please call me at 271-3503 or Richard G. Rumba, Administrator of the Environmental Health Section, at 271-1987 if you have any questions or would like further information.

Sincerely,


Thomas S. Burack
Commissioner

cc: Rep. C. Beck
Rep. J. Day
Rep. A. Millham
Rep. J. Daler
Rep. D. Borden
Senator H. Janeway